

Metropolitan: DCFS

by BioHaz

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Summary: A younger Spider J walks the streets of the City, a City touched by the rest of the DC Universe.

1. Default Chapter Title

Untitled Document > "So I said to him, you can shove your contract down your throat and spend the next three weeks shitting it out of that bloated sac of lard you call an ass!" <p> The alcohol on her breath was nauseating and intoxicating at the same time. Then I listened to what she was babbling about. Yep, attractive was not an adjective I would use with this girl. Sickening to the point where the idea of a monastery lifestyle surrounded by other men of the cloth, no matter how sick their true acts of devotion were, was appealing. <p>

"I mean, IÂ've NEVER been insulted in such a short time in my life!"

Then you add the shrill voice to the mix. High pitched and whiny, but with this hint of laughter behind it that forced you to listen somewhat. Imagine nails scratching down your inner ear and popping a hole in your eardrum and youÂ'll have a good idea of what I was being subjected to.

The bartending bot hovered over, itsÂ¹ personality template as fake as my fatherÂ's was. "Another drink?" It asked with sincerity in its voice.

Her eyes lit up. "Yes please. Care to join me?" She asked me with a sideways glance.

Oh no, the torture doesnÂ't end. First I thought this would be over after a long torment-filled expanse of time consisting of nothing more important than bar room small talk. She had other plans, derailing the conversation to Å'the universe revolves around me, so you of course think IÂ'm important enough to listen to.Â¹ Now, sheÂ's hitting on me! And me without my bowel disrupter. Mental note: Never

leave the house without heat.

"Well?" the bartending bot asked. I squinted at him from over the top of my palm computer's screen. An eyebrow raise later and the mechanic liquor pusher was clear I wasn't in the mood.

"Are you sure? It's my treat." My stool mate said finally, leaning over so her scented bosom was mere inches from my head. "A little drink never hurt anyone. In fact, I can name a few times it lead to QUITE a bit of fun." She continued the sequence of her too small top jiggling as she gyrated her upper body as if it were an incentive for me. I don't think the eyebrow is going to work. Time for a more direct route.

"While the idea of ingesting large amounts of alcohol and then leaving this dismal excuse of a nightclub to partake in some hot, dirty, raunchy sex involving midgets and monkeys does have its' appeal, I have more pressing matters. For example, as I sit here and waste my time rebutting your laughable attempt at picking me up, a very well known corporation is green lighting a project that will wipe all children of a certain genetic type off the face of the planet. Thereby eradicating the genes needed to stop the spread of DBT. DBT, as you undoubtedly don't know, is the chemical used in infobursts, nanite clouds of commercial feeds pollinating the globe, and these children are the only people in the WORLD with the natural ability to not pay attention to their intoxicating messages. With the gene these children carry, civilization could be saved from another thousand years of worshiping a box with moving pictures in it by simply engineering a DNA reconstruction nanite carrying this gene sequence. Instead of writing, which is my God-given gift, about this black cancer and its plans for our future well being, I'm stuck here fending off a fly with nothing better to do with her time but babble about the last time she was insulted!" I finally screamed, veins pulsing from under my forehead, the spider tattoo under my hairline almost dancing as the blood raced beneath my skin.

Her makeup cracked as she sat there shocked at my response. I turned back to my monitor and continued writing.

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**METROPOLITAN: DCFS
> Higher Implications pt 1 (of 3)
****Written by: Alex
BioHaz Cook
> Edited by: Jack Paris Bohtis **

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"You call this writing?" Royce asked as I draged my ass through the Word security check. The hotshot field reporter thinks he's better than me. Column writers and field reporters just don't get along, it's a story as old as time.

"Good morning Royce. Was my column not up to your expectations?"

"No, I expect crap each time I read your column. You've never failed me there, but today's heaping pile of shit was extra nasty. It smells like bullshit actually."

"Bullshit? As in not true? As in I made the story up Royce?"

"Exactly." Royce smiled.

My knuckle never felt so good slamming against someone's two front teeth. The pain as his incisor cut into the top of my hand was nirvana.

"Jerusalem! In my office, now!" Damn, caught red handed. Royce stayed on the ground, nursing his bleeding mouth. The filthy bitch.

"Its all fact." Was the first thing out of my mouth as I walked into Walker's office.

"There is no way SymCorp is linked to this bizarre conspiracy you've vomited onto the screen here, Spider! You have zero hard proof, and this column is full of hearsay at best! You're going to have our asses in court for years because of this!" Walker screeched. Editor in Chief training must involve 'How to Scream Anything at Anytime 101'.

"I have documented proof of all of it, Walker. Each person I talked to is on record and verified." I began to say.

"Don't bother. From now on all column's get my approval before they see print." Walker demanded.

"What? No fucking way Walker! I've been on staff two years now. I can write whatever the bloody fuck I want whenever the bloody fuck I want!"

"Not anymore kid! You're still the new boy here, and you've already pissed off quite a few of the higher ups because of your edgy reporting style. You are treading in dangerous water. Play nice for a while and then we'll talk about 'journalistic freedom'." I needed a syringe of some good drugs. NOW.

"In fact, to help you out, I've prepared an outline of what I'd like to see the next few columns cover. And here's an expense card for the admission."

I needed a gun. NOW.

I glanced at his list. "Music scene? Are you kidding? I'm NOT a fucking LIFESTYLE JOCKEY you decrepit cunt!" I was beyond pissed at this point, and want to rip his scrotum out through his chest cavity.

"Want to keep your job?" Walker asked simply.

The fucker knows I'm back in jail if I lose this gig.

Bastard. My hand didn't feel as good as it did after hitting Royce once I clocked Walker. It still felt pretty damn good though. It was when Walker hit me back and broke a rib I knew I was stuck writing the column. On Music.

Music.

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Music permeated her every pore. The notes and vibrations ricocheted off her bones and harmonized with her very soul. The sound continued to build, forming a texture and taste in the back of her throat as she continued to push the music further and farther. The waves of energy pounded out of the speakers and surrounded her, her hands flying across the two turntables she had before her. Old fashioned by current standards, but perfect for what she wanted. A short interface modification later and the steel wheels were ready to go. And go they did, constantly, non-stop, into the wee hours of the morning.

It was as if she were touching the face of God each time she played, dropping record and voice over here, mixing in this backbeat with that sample, and tying it all together with a crushing chorus that caused the dance floor in her mind to explode with energy. It was a divine experience for her, almost addicting, now that she thought about it. Spiritual on a level her pastor had promised her all her life, yet never delivered. It was her God given gift. It was her God. Her fingertips brushed the hair out of the divine Diva's eyes as she continued to play.\

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I pushed the hair out of my eyes and watched as they continued to play. They sucked beyond comprehension. I have no words to describe how badly they sucked. Boy Bands were bad to begin with, but a Revivalist Boy Band?

"THE RIGHT STUFF!" The Donnie impersonator screamed. He was from some band in the 1980s that started this horrible fad we would be plagued with for a few hundred more years. A few bottles had already been thrown at him each time he chanted the chorus.

Two of them weren't from me.

The City doesn't have a music scene as far as I can see. All I see are groups of disillusioned people looking to escape their sorry excuses for lives. It's maddening to see them all scurry around the dance floor looking for some potential fun for the night. All in time to five guys whose sexual practices obviously differ from mine. Not that I care, but the anal reaming really wasn't a great opening act. Hell, 'Donnie hasn't even picked up his pants since the first song and Jordan slipped on what I hope was lubrication and broke his arm.

"THE RIGHT STUFF!"

No, I think it's the wrong stuff. In fact, it's time to show you how wrong it is. The disrupter whined as I set it, took aim, and unleashed its bowel-effecting ray onto the stage. The five boys froze in various lewd poses, the energy penetrating their skin and rupturing their organs. Shit and urine fell from their orifices in such a torrent that the crowd was rushing back in a collective wave in fear of the human excrement.

The bouncer soon found me. I was hidden in the closet, on the other end of the club, waiting for the crowd to die before sneaking out. The huge behemoth of a man nearly ripped off the hinges off the door once he thought I was inside. Who needs the bowel disrupter? I nearly

shit myself from fear alone.

"You're the fuck who zapped the band huh?" He questioned, noticing my gun held in my shaking hands. That was proof enough for him.

"THANK YOU!" He said as he reached down and enveloped me in a huge bear hug. My back cracked in protest, but his grip only tightened. Oxygen was becoming a serious issue as the hug continued. My death was far from imminent at the hands of this guy.

"I can't thank you enough for shutting those bitches up! Where do you get such wonderful toys?" The bouncer asked, his hands clapping together in glee like a two year old. He dropped me to the floor and gave me enough time to catch my breath before answering. One URL later and I was free to go, along with an unlimited VIP pass to the club any night I wanted. I never knew causing shit could pay so well.

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"You're going to pay us WHAT?" She said. She was still sweating from practice, the beats fresh in her head. The call had disrupted her, breaking her concentration as soon as it rang. She had disdainfully picked it up and answered, readying a torment of curses for disturbing her. Hazardous Sounds New Talent V.P. Ken Zoitis' voice had stopped her in her tracks. After a few sentences of conversation she stared into the viewscreen dumbfounded.

"Jenna," Zoitis said smoothly from the other end. "You're Hazardous Sounds material. We would LOVE to have you on board. The Creative Team is all pining for some song crossovers already, and you're not even signed. We want you, and we're willing to pay." His smooth skin crinkled as he smiled. His eyes almost appeared genuine. Their blue shade was welcoming and secret all at the same time.

Jenna was awestruck. She didn't know what to say. Flabbergasted was the best word to describe her state of mind. "I . . . I have to talk to the band first . . ." She stammered, reddish brown hair hanging limp against her neck. She looked her worst on what could possibly be her best day ever. Or not.

"Of course. We understand. You have all of my contact addresses, including personal. Please, call me as soon as you've decided, either way." Ken said, again shining his winning smile before cutting the holo connection.

"Ten hundred thou..."

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"...sand children were saved because of my column and look at how the Word pays me back!" I screamed at my fellow crowdmates.

Vulgarity and hate spewed forth from the audio speakers, bruising lyrics matched with equally disturbing drumbeats and mixes. The two women rapped about violence against they and theirs, whoever they were. It was all so general I wasn't sure who to pissed at!

What we have before us is a specimen of the dysfunctional family of

2150. Meaning while the corporations suck mommy and daddy dry, daughter and son are left to their own devices. It leads to a variety of problems.

In other words, another old story. Except this time, the times are worse. I should know. I've lived them. You all sit in your high paying jobs while your offspring look to whatever can provide them solace in this fucked up world. What's worse, if you all looked at what they read or what they listened to, and actually acted like parents every once in a while, they would not be in the trouble they're in this day and age! The rappers on the stage are preying on that very defect in the family unit to get your children to buy into their propaganda, all because they did the exact same thing when they were young. History repeats itself, unless one of you out there starts paying fucking attention to what is going on here!

They continue to rap, no matter how hard I protest for their immediate death. Others have joined my cause, while the rest have formed their own, opposing party. Damn, I thought I made a mental note to never leave the house without my bowel disruptor.

Fighting is unavoidable. However, add alcohol and my journalistic pride, and there is bound to be a problem. The first problem was that I was still sober due to a lock Walker had put on the damn expense card. The second problem was that my journalistic pride had shriveled up and died once these two started rhyming or whatever the fuck it was they called what they did. One screwed up combination.

"Fuck you pig!" One of the girls on stage finally screamed back at me, her middle finger extended. That was the match that lit the flame. Their side strongly agreed while my side disagreed, even stronger. That was when someone threw a bottle. They said it was from my direction, but I didn't know what they were talking about. Another bottle was returned, and the volley began. It had been a good three years since my last bar fight, a brawl I'll always hold dear for the deep scar now across my calf that flares up everytime the Powers That Be decided we need rain. I really miss those days. Then I remembered why I always wanted a bodyguard when on assignment; not that Walker would give me one. I returned or blocked as many punches and kicks as I could, but I was soon overwhelmed. I ended up taped up in bed, healing as best I could. Broken bones suck, even after the mending gel has worn off. I'm down for the night at least, all because I disagreed with two people full of anger who are preying on your kids.

I almost feel like a hero. Where's my fucking spandex?

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"Leather is so much better." The pierced female sat down, her flat black hair hanging against her head elegantly.

"Fashion isn't my forte, I pay my receptionist to take care of that." The other member of the room said, both occupants acting in a familiar fashion towards each without saying one another's names. They never spoke names. Just in case.

"The clothes make the man." The woman said, light picking up off one particularly nasty looking piercing in her eyebrow.

"The money makes the man. And I'm a very made man." He replied, reaching for his glass of wine and taking a sip.

"Heads of major music labels do." The other said, also reaching for her glass.

"Not nearly as much as I." He paused there, as if savoring the fact he was able to say such a thing. "Now, onto business. We need a certain band swayed to our side. You will be wired the details as well as normal payment for services rendered. If you have any questions, you know where to reach me." He finished, and his form shimmered slightly as the holo receptors shut off, causing his distinctive frame to dissipate with the wind.

The woman smiled as her form also disappeared. However, it was no trick of mechanics and lights that allowed her to perform such a feat.

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This was my third night of hell. The two previous nights had lead to fights on one scale or another. Pardon me if I acted a bit nervous while the next band set up. I swear, Walker planned the whole thing.

The band continued to set up as I continued to purchase drinks. I had a friend of mine hack the expense card. Now I can at least bear this assignment in an intoxicant induced state of euphoria. I had my stash in my sock, ready to go when things got really bad, all thanks to the Word and their fat pockets. Someone had to pay for this crime, this absurdity, and this injustice. They would pay for assigning me this job, so saith I, Spider Jerusalem! And as far as you're considered I am the father, the son, and the holy FUCKING spirit.

Ok, so I already sneaked a little from my stash, what's your point?

It seemed like the band was doing a sound and effect check. Amateurs. This should have all been done long before now, I thought as another drink slid down my throat. The narcotics racing through my system weren't helping my patience either.

BZZZZZ

Oh damn. Bloody feed back is the worst way to kill an expecting crowd. That was a sign that these people were wasting my time. Three days into this supposed 'music scene' and I actually knew what I was talking about. Time to sneak a little more.

Quick bathroom break later and the band was finally ready. The stage had grown dark, little lights flashed here and there while the band waited for the crowd to settle back down. Once the group was silent, the first note echoed through the room.

I was hooked from that note. The second and third note followed in time with the lights and holographic organic shapes being projected from the rig on top the stage. The drummer began, adding bass and tempo to the song, mixing in with the notes the guitarist continued to strum. The keyboard sang out next, its' player hunched over as if

involved in some ritual sacrifice to get the instrument to play so well. Then the turntablist followed suit, a smirk on her face as her head dropped and her hands literally flew across the vinyl. The other three musicians sped up the song to an insane level in three short minutes. The images continued, flashing in erratic patterns all over the club.

The music almost touched me on a spiritual level. The kind the church of whatever had always promised in their dogmatic teachings. It was as if the Divine was dancing along with us all.

Yeah, if God was dancing, I guess I can admit I was too. This was music, pushing and prodding people into activity their brains would never consider accessible in the outside world. Music that was great effected everyone, no matter what walk of life you hailed from. Higher Implications, fronted by Jenna Hallowine, did just that.

I probably look like an idiot dancing like this.

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"We did it!" Jenna exclaimed, shocked their set went so well. A lot of the set up was new and hadn't been yet perfected, or even tested for that matter. It had worked though. Obviously, Jenna thought as the crowd continued to chant their name.

Higher Implications!

> Higher Implications!
 Higher Implications!

The four of them just sat and listened, awed there was a crowd out there actually wanting more. Too bad they didn't realize others did as well.

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NEXT ISSUE: Higher Implications faces some tough choices while Spider makes some interesting discoveries.

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Welcome to the first in a series of one shots and limited series starring everyone's favorite journalist in the DCFS universe.

Okay, first things first. Before you fill my box with mail about how Spider J and the DCU aren't connected at all, I ask you to bear with me. Certain things have been bent and twisted to make this series possible. Example one, Spider is younger than his counterpart in Transmetropolitan, written by God, hence the name Metropolitan: DCFS. Other things have also transpired that I can't quite share with you. Yet.

Again, bear with me, and you'll see. Hehehehe.

Send all comments to hazardous_designs@yahoo.com

2. Default Chapter Title

Untitled Document > <p>The jungle trance seeped into my senses,

gently, quietly, yet with a power behind it. Powerful music hidden in pop wrapping. <p>

I did a little checking. Seems Higher Implications is a wonder band. Their single got played on some holovision sitcom, which the radios picked up. Few hundred times after the masses have been subjected to its repeated airplay and boom, Higher Implications is an underground success. A few hundred regulars started traveling with the band club to club, hypnotized by the siren's song.

I was no better. If my friends, who are few and far between, could see me now, they would shit. I was in a kneeling position, head bent in an act of devotion. It hit me like a ton of bricks.

Higher Implications hit me like a ton of bricks I should say. I sat in my apartment, surrounded on all sides by images of Jenna and her band mates, Kirk Duncan, Randy Matthews, and Daphine Alberts, the guitarist, keyboardist, and drummer respectively. Thousands of stills and animated holo images spiraled around my meager living space, and I basked in them all. Their glory. Her glory.

It was Jenna I was fixated on. She had touched me. Somewhere deep, her two hands had caressed me, awakening something I had long thought dead or beaten out of me. Her face cycled through the mix the most; her reddish brown hair framing her simple and beautiful face.

Then I woke up. I can't explain it anymore than I'm used to images of anger and injustice in my mind, not feelings of love and engravings of happiness. I plan people's death; I concoct evil ways to destroy a man, all due to boredom. A girl smiles at me and I'm ready to call in an air strike on the entire city block. It was the instant I realized my normal thoughts were missing that I woke up. Or broke free, I should say.

Jenna Hallowine hit me like a ton of bricks. I just wonder if she knew it.

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**METROPOLITAN: DCFS
> 'Higher Implications pt 2 (of 3)'
 ****Written by: Alex
'BioHaz' Cook
> Edited by: Matthew 'Hawkeye' Pierce **

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The bike was all she had, and she knew it. All she really cared for that is. In her mind, it was the things that you cared for that you could truly claim ownership of. She didn't care for her drums nearly as much as her bike.

Daphine was riding hard, blowing off steam after the concert. Jenna had wanted to talk, but they all wanted to celebrate more. Jenna had finally given in, and they all drowned part of the night away. About an hour ago most of them parted ways, the boys heading to their new girlfriends beds, Jenna home alone, and Daphine on her bike. It all ended normally, but this time on a much happier note.

The night ended on a much worse note in the end however. Daphine never saw the car coming. She didn't even see the road it had come

barreling off of. Her hoverbike was hit, its gyros spinning out of control. She had little chance of surviving once the car flipped as well, landing on top of her, the bike wedged between her and the ground.

Daphine Alberts was dead seconds before a long leather boot stepped on top of the car, the owner being an ebony skinned woman with short dread locks who peered deeply into the crash. The metal piercing in her face picked up the fire of the chemical tanks used to create the hover effect. Her smile was full of razor teeth while she watched the tanks ignite, bathing her and Daphine, as well as everything else in a two hundred-foot radius with napalm like blaze. The blast was quick yet devastating, the land around the accident scorched beyond recognition.

Almost as if someone were covering their tracks, I thought as my camera continued to canvass the area, snapping away digital images for later inspection. I swear a journalist is half a detective and half a poet. Shakespeare I am not, and Batman could beat my ass, but I do okay. This was way out of my league though. A dead-end. And a dead band member.

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"She isn't dead." Jenna whispered, too shocked to say much else. Her mind hadn't quite clicked with the fact Daphine was dead.

They weren't the best of friends, but they still had a bond none the less. More of a friendship than Daphine had with anyone else. Add to it the fact that the band had finally made it, then this happened, and you could see why this was too much to handle for Jenna right now.

"She very much is. And we're short a drummer." Kirk finally said, softly, as if his words offered no room for rebuttal.

"I know." Jenna sighed. She had known now for a week, Kirk and Randy had been auditioning a few the past two days, but Jenna just couldn't do it. She couldn't participate in the screening process yet.

The phone companies long ago decided they would time every important call to ever happen in someone's life to ring at the worst time possible.

RING RING

Jenna groaned as she reached for the phone, Kirk's head perking up a little to see who it was. Never knew when some hot babe would call.

The MONDEX Music logo sprung onto the view screen, Jenna's eyes growing as the image of New Talent Development Head Chester Malcolm faded into view.

"Jenna Hallowine, Chester Malcolm, pleasure to meet you. Let me get down to business. A talent scout was at your concert last week and has been trying to fastball you onto my desk ever since. Well, once I heard the tape, and then found out about your recent loss, I had to call. MONDEX is willing to make a generous offer in hopes of persuading you over to our side. How does five hundred thousand

dollars sound for the initial record, as well as a fifty percent increase each successful record after that? We're willing to work with you, so please, talk to me here."

Chester stopped talking finally, Jenna, Kirk and Randy starring dumbfounded at the holoscreen.

"I think", Chester's somewhat old and rugged lips grimaced as he broke into their silence, "I've called at a bad time. Please think about the offer, and look over the papers I've had messengered over." Malcolm briefly glanced off screen, "Which should be there--"

KNOCK KNOCK

--now. Good day Jenna." Chester finished, fading from view as Kirk stood to answer the door. He threw the envelope next to the one Hazardous Sounds had delivered not an hour before. Other companies had called, but these two were the only ones who had actually produced a contract. The week had been strange indeed.

"We have a hard choice in front of us. I need a break, and I'm sure I'm not the only one. Let's get out of here, and meet up tomorrow, same time, to finish this." Kirk said, again standing and reaching for his coat as he walked to the door. "Some of us still need time to mourn." he finished, looking over at the still Jenna, staring at both envelopes on her kitchen table.

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I sat there, staring at the two empty shot glasses in front of me. It was a little surprising to find out me and Fred had something in common.

Fred Christ was a band manager I knew. Sniveling little man, but still valuable for information from the underground. When I came asking about Higher Implications he started spouting off about Jenna's virtues and the band's greatness. Chalk one more victim up to the hypnotizing effect Higher Implications had on an audience. I was starting to sense a column coming on, involving conditioning via music and brainwashing melodies. The column I ended up writing was much different in the end.

"She plays those two turntables like a god, Spider! A fucking God!" Christ continued to say, for the third time this conversation I noted. Little minds are easier to effect, I ventured.

"So what's the what on them Fred? Heard anything good?" I asked, fishing for whatever tidbits I could from this washed up reject.

"Well, seems MONDEX and Hazardous Sounds have both made generous offers to fast track the band onto their label. And these are lucrative contracts, Spider. Video airplay, major single distribution, the works! Shit bands dream of getting in their pubescent fantasies. All a week after their second major performance. Higher Implications has only been playing live for a month now." Fred replied, teasing me a little I could tell.

"A month? What about the sitcom using their music for the title sequence?" I asked.

"The shows only been online for three weeks now. It's had some major hits, rating it in the top ten, but its still a newbie. The band has gained recognition from the show, buts it's their live performance that sways people to their side."

"MONDEX. They sound familiar. Didn't that one singer who shot himself belong to them?"

"Yeah. Corbin something. Grunge influenced pop artist that was using VR to reach his audiences. MONDEX picked him up fast. Played a few dates, then found with a self inflicted shotgun wound in his head one morning in Seattle."

"Hazardous Sounds are relatively new aren't they? I've heard some not so nice things from that camp as well," I reasoned, remembering certain AP Wire feeds coming over the web in the last year.

"Yeah, so it really comes down to the lesser of two evils," Christ replied, taking another shot after filling my glass as well.

"So which is worse," I asked, "the one who pays more? Or the one who pays less?"

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"MONDEX pays more! I think this is an easy decision Jenna!" Randy said, rising his voice slightly with each word. They had been going at this all night. It was a week and half since each offer had come in, and still they were no closer to an answer.

"But we all know what happens to MONDEX bands Randy." Kirk threw in, sitting calmly at the table while watching Jenna pace the kitchen.

"I need some air." Jenna finally said, tired of arguing over this. She never thought deciding which record contract to sign would cause so many damnable problems.

The air was fresh, oxygen recyclers hung from the corners of each skyscraper in the City, pumping out a ton of clean air every hour. Jenna took a deep breath and closed her eyes, contemplating the fork in the road before her.

"I've found the most tempting offer is usually the correct one." A woman's voice suddenly said, breaking Jenna from her reprieve.

"Who's there?" Jenna asked, spinning around to find the source of the voice.

A leather clad lady of fine form walked around the corner, Jenna immediately noticing the piercing in her face. "Leatherette is my name dear, and I'm here on behalf of some friends to help you with this difficult decision," she answered, shifting her weight from her right to left foot as she spoke.

"Where the fuck did you come from?" Jenna nearly shouted, catching herself at the last second.

"I just dropped by Jenna. Our mutual friend gave me a call, to see if there was anything I could do help," Leatherette answered, shrugging her shoulders, fake sincerity dripping from her words.

"Mutual friend? And that would be?"

"He doesn't wish to be revealed quite yet, but lets just say my services don't come cheap. The larger of the two checks being thrown your way is probably signed by the same person." Leatherette smiled. "Who sent me isn't important in the end however. Your decision is." The smile died.

"We're thinking about it now," Jenna stammered, backing away from the leather clad new comer.

"I'm sure you are dear. All I want you to know is there are consequences on either side of the coin. New friends," at which point Leatherette extended her gloved hand toward Jenna, " or new enemies." Leatherette flexed her hand slightly, four blades springing from the tip of her fingers, again pointing directly at Jenna.

"Are we clear?"

"Very," Jenna answered, sweat rolling down her face slightly.

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This is the third time in as many weeks I've seen Higher Implications. While I understand there is some hypnotizing effect at play here, I can't help myself. Especially with their return concert, showcasing the new drummer.

The music started to have its effect on me, feelings of love and devotion washing over me. It's almost as if as soon as I realized I was enraptured, I broke free. Not many of the other patrons had the same ability it seemed. I guess being pissed off twenty-four seven has its benefits.

They were still amazing. Drummer and side effects aside, their music was brilliant. I was in heaven each time I listened to its striking melody; each time I dissected its words for new meanings. Then I realized its implications. Was it something the band did through technological means? Was it a metahuman ability one or more of the band members had? Was it something more than that, from the other side of the extreme? Did any of them know?

There was no doubt, she had a God-given gift. A God-given gift I was blessed to hear. A gift that caused individuals who heard it to be swayed to its owners side. A God-given gift. Or a God-given curse?

"You have no idea how right you are boy." A one eyed man sitting next to me drinking a Wolf's Head beer said suddenly, breaking my line of thought.

Things just got interesting, I noticed, as Jenna went into her solo, punching it up extra high tonight.

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> <p>NEXT ISSUE: Higher Implications makes a decision, while Jenna makes an even tougher choice. Spider gets a hold of some interesting files after he talks with a paranoid old man with delusions of grandeur. Or were they delusions?</p>

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Send all comments to hazardous_designs@yahoo.com

3. Default Chapter Title

"You don't see what you are do you?"

Jenna turned, looking into the crowd of well-wishers and posers for the voice. It was laced with laughter and deceit, yet intoxicating and arousing all at once. It was more the tone than the words that caused her to pay attention.

"No idea of your importance, or power. Truly a sad joke." At which the red haired twenty-something laughed softly. "If only you knew your true position. Father and his grand schemes, never filling everyone in. I guess the adage goes something like 'What you don't know won't hurt you'." Another smile followed by a laugh. "Except in your case, it will kill you." More laughter came, stronger now. Jenna was transfixed on each face muscle that contorted as the mysterious man continued to laugh.

"Great show. Can't wait to see you again," he finished, his red hair merging with the crowd. Jenna stood there, dumbstruck yet again, this time not as visibly as in the past few weeks. She had gotten used to the feeling. And that pissed her off more than anything.

The last three weeks replayed in her mind. Daphine's death, then Hazardous Sounds and MONDEX's bid war for the band. Leatherette or whatever her name was and her not so veiled threats followed by the first stranger to come by and share some insight. Jenna paused and replayed what the red haired man had said to her again. Jenna was getting really pissed at being talked at, and not to.

"Where did you go?" Jenna said aloud, searching for her mysterious soothsayer, who was nowhere to be found. She wondered if it had all been a trick.

METROPOLITAN: DCFS Å'Higher Implications pt 3 (of 3)Â¹ Written by:
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When you've been through the kind of life the Power's That Be shafted me with, you tend to make friends with some of the lower element. One such friend of mine had just delivered a very special present: his findings after hacking into the MONDEX Mainframe.

Christ had raised the hairs on the back of my neck, but it was the old guy and his comments that pushed me to find out a bit more about Higher Implications' suitors. The old man said there were forces from all around pulling at her, the gifted. Weird shit, which I chalked up to some insane drugs.

I kept telling myself what a hell of a column this was going to make. Destroy any idea the Word had of assigning me to this shit again, and uncovering an evil corporation for what they were. This might be a Utopian society, but we still breed our share of fuck-ups.

Let's see, what can we find children. Why, what's this?

MEMO DATE: FEB, 50 SUBJECT: NEW TALENT FROM: CMALCOLM

Higher Implications is proving difficult to sign. Measures have been taken to ensure a quick result to this standoff. Jenna Hallowine seems to be undecided, which is sad because she is the one we really want.

Blah, Blah, Blah. Damn can he ramble! Basic gist of the MEMO was they wanted Jenna and they wanted her bad. Sweet contracts, and three record deals out the gate. Then I hit the next file.

MEMO DATE: APR, 49 SUBJECT: RELEASED TALENT FROM: SBRAVERMAN

Slptied - RELEASED The band served their usefulness, and has been let go to make room for the next Gifted. Resources digested and redirected as well, commission and revenue already transferred to surplus accounts.

Short and sweet, so unlike Malcolm. Make room for the next gifted? Hmm, what did you send me old friend.

There was a database in the mix, accompanying a few more memos about Higher Implication's contracts and what not. Once I opened it, I knew I had hit paydirt. A list of every artist and band released from their MONDEX contract in the last five years scrolled in front of my eyes. Then I noticed the dates. None of them lasted six months after signing. Few queries later, and its clear most of these bands were offered the same deal Higher Implications was.

It was obvious MONDEX was up to something. Time to go find some disgruntled ex-employees to tell me what.

I never even thought about the lack of information on Hazardous Sounds until it was too late.

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"Your column is late Jerusalem!" Walker screamed into the phone, spittle raining down on his camera lens.

"Walker, we both know it isn't due for another six hours. Eight if I bypass you." I replied, calm as I continued to scan my newfound MONDEX computer files. This database had a lot to say.

"No fucking chance. This had better be worth it Spider, or its your ass." Walker shouted again, as if raising his voice would hurry me along. Fucker had no clue who he was dealing with

"Yes sir, Sergeant, sir. Is that all?" I was too busy to describe to him all the ways I was going to destroy him once I was done with this column. Walker just kind of stammered a yes statement; obviously

surprised I didn't rise to his bait. "End call." I told the computer as I continued my research.

I reached over and played the camera's audio feed from earlier in the day, taken after I found the lead singer from Sliptied, Keith Paris.

"My name is Keith Paris, *COUGH* *COUGH* What the fuck do you want?" I glanced at the screen to my side to watch the slideshow of still images from the camera as well, downloaded and ready to peruse. Keith's face was scabbed with bumps, looking self-inflicted. Little scars here and there, Keith's fingernails obviously too long the day he lost track of time in the mirror after a good hit. The track marks were evident in his arm

"Spider Jerusalem, the Word. I was looking for some information on MONDEX?" I asked, hoping to touch a nerve with the name alone.

"Fuck you." Keith said and turned, hobbling back down the alley.

I caught up, the camera clicking away at Keith's departing form. "Listen, Keith, I'm here to find some dirt on MONDEX. Give me whatever you got."

Keith turned, looking at me with his one good eye. Acid straight to the retina can easily destroy the user's sight and disfigure them as well, especially the alleyway crap these bums get, and not the government grade stuff the rest of us are used to. "What beef you got with MONDEX?" He asked.

"Let's just say the big bad corporation is about to stomp on someone I like." I said. "They fucked you over. Help me fuck them over"

Keith stopped, looking me dead in the eye. "MONDEX fucked me over. They promised us the world, and delivered us into hell. I'm the only one left. Brad bailed, and Sara didn't last too long. We made them a fucking mint, and they shoved us out to pasture. Severance pay they cut me each week barely covers the drugs they would pump me up with before a show, the drugs THEY fucking got me addicted to. As you can see", timed with a series of camera shots showing off Keith's gaunt frame, bones and skin being the majority of it. Fat never entered the picture, literally. "food is a luxury. All I wanted to do was sing, man, and they gave me the chance. If I knew the price, I'd have fucking cut out my vocal cords." Keith squinted with his good eye, flipped off the floating camera, and walked off again. I think I got about all I could from him.

As I sat in my living space, I realized I've got more than enough to nail these bastards to the wall.

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As she sat in her living space, she realized she was about to be nailed to the wall. Every one seemed to have an opinion on what she should do, except her. Jenna thought it was time to find out a little bit more about what she wanted.

"Bout time you start asking some questions." A one eyed man said, a

wolf's head hanging from a rope around his neck.

Jenna just fell back into her normal reaction this month, shocked. Eyes wide, mouth open, the whole nine yards. Flashes of light and then the appearance of someone who wasn't there before seemed to have that effect on people.

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"You seem to have this effect on people Spider. You piss them off!" Walker screamed at me for the second time today. All right, kid gloves are off. Weapons check, fire at will.

"Listen up you under paid, over weight joke of an editor. I've had enough of your shit for today. There is your fucking article, signed, sealed, and delivered. It covers everything your 'syllabus' outlined, and its two hours ahead of schedule. You wanted a report on the music scene, there it is." I seethed into the phone, the cigarette in my mouth nearly falling to the ground.

"You've basically written that MONDEX, a high level record company, makes and breaks its own talent, and illegally redirects the funds back into itself, breaking about thirty Mediate rules off the top of my head. MONDEX has a clean record Spider, and this is mostly baseless hypothesis or hyperbole!" Walker replied, screaming for emphasis.

"That's what you always say Walker! Did you read the article? Did you hear Keith's testimony? What about Jasmine from Destiny's Abortion? She was in the middle of a fucking withdrawal you bastard! How about Dru from Mysterious Origins? Those pictures of his fucking stomach don't lie. MONDEX practically forced Corbin Nevero to shoot himself! Those bastards did it to them and I'm going to see them fucking hanged for it!"

"This is all so your little idol doesn't get stomped on by the big bad wolf, huh?" Walker asked, again baiting me.

"This goes far beyond Higher Implications. These people need to be stopped. That is what I do, I stop the evil the only way I can. I scream about it until enough Neanderthals like you understand what good and evil actually are!" My blood was boiling, my shouts echoing off the confined space I slept in each night.

"We're not running this Spider."

"Pull it and I'll have your job."

"You've got nothing here Spider. Not a single leg to stand on. I've got all the bargaining chips here, and you know not to push your luck. Your parole board is looking for a reason to throw your ass back in jail after the piece you wrote on their guards inside the prison colonies. Give me a reason to throw you to the dogs and I will." Walker finished, smirking into the viewscreen.

Initiate nuclear payload. Detonate.

"Editors are meant to be unbiased in their decisions in all aspects of their job correct? Including assignments. One of the two girls who I got into a bar room brawl with two weeks ago was seen at your

apartment last night. In fact, she's been seen there for the past two months. Take a look." Pictures of the girl in question licking what appeared to be whipped cream from between Walker's toes flashed onto his viewscreen. "Certain parties have been informed that if my column doesn't see press tomorrow these pictures will be released to the Word executive board...all one hundred and thirteen of them. The investors will also receive these images, all fifty-seven of them. So in other words, don't run the column, and it will be you out in the street selling your ass to survive, not me."

Walker starred back at me in shock.

"And how the hell do you get an anaconda in there anyway?" I asked.

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"You see now don't you? You see your place." The old man, Old One Eye, asked his latest charge, the latest bearer of the Gift.

The Gift to persuade.

"Yes, I do. I really do." Jenna sighed, the scene in front of her beautiful beyond description. Asgard's gates shined with a brilliance she would have never guessed possible. The World Tree pumped with life, ebbing over her, calling her. The Gods and Goddesses themselves gazed on her with love and acceptance in their eyes.

"Good." One Eye said, Ragnarock's chained form howling in the distance.

'I understand exactly where I fit now.' Jenna thought to herself, smiling, not because of her surroundings, but because of her newfound self worth.

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It was the night after my column had run. I was out, happy as could be that I had Walker's balls in my hands, and I ended up saving someone important in the process. I had a few stops, pit areas to inject my body with some new intoxicant, and then I was on my way to see Higher Implications, and Jenna. I couldn't help but wonder if they had read the article...if she had read the article.

She walked out onto the stage by herself. Just a single spotlight shined on her as the curtain parted. She smiled, thanking everyone for his or her applause.

"I'd like to thank some one especially, tonight. I do think he is one of our hardcore fans, even if he claims to hate everyone." Jenna said, smiling out at the crowd. "Spider Jerusalem, we thank you. Not everyone hates you." I could have sworn she looked at me when she said the final part. I wish I could tell you I wasn't smiling as the curtain rose and Jenna walked back behind her two turntables.

None of the other band was with her. None of the equipment was hooked up, except Jenna's mixer, two tables, and relays to the club's sound system.

I sat there watching skies of beauty beyond comprehension. Engravings

of legends and ancient fights. Valiant warriors and eternal peace. And for once, I didn't reject it as soon as I had in the past. It was almost as if the feelings were meant for me. A gift for me.

But reject it I did. I had to. I needed hate to continue to do what I do. To do what I did for Jenna. To protect her and the rest of you from what is really out there, I guess. I will never forget those images though.

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"We'll never forget your help. As always, a job well done." The viewscreen said, the audio piped through hidden speakers in the walls of the ancient house.

"And, as always, thank you for a prompt transfer of funds." Leatherette replied, raising her glass in the air before sipping it.

"The money is meaningless in the long run. It's the talent I'm after. Besides, in the long run I threw them peanuts compared to what you charge. Money means nothing, but it is important for the beginning phases. Spend it wisely and it goes a long way. Thanks to your involvement and forcible play on words, I moved Jenna Hallowine right into my court."

"Ah yes, you and your campaign. You continue to gather your pieces, Ken. But who are you going to pit them against?" Leatherette asked Zoitis smoothly, enraged at the fact she had been played so easily, but never letting it show. Never show them your true face Leatherette always said.

"Now, Leatherette, that would be telling. We'll be talking soon enough. Good bye." Zoitis said, cutting the connection as his face faded into the Hazardous Sounds logo.

"Yes we will. Yes we will." Leatherette smiled, rising her cup once again. She drained its liquid, throwing the glass against the wall.

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"Leatherette has been paid for services rendered. We're ready to start with Jenna now." Zoitis turned in his chair, looking at his father, Old One Eye, who sat in the executive chair drinking from a large mead cup. "She will be asking questions soon, but I don't see her being a real threat."

"Good, Loki, good." One Eye said, watching his son drop his mortal guise. Plans were moving along nicely. Odin was going to play this game different this time.

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In the end, who is the lesser of the two evils? The one paying more, or the one paying less?

End
file.